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form an organized opposition; instead they fought among themselves over priority in rank and position (*mestnichestvo*), over estates and crownlands, and over the favors of the Czar.

The lack of unity and struggle for power existed also among the lesser nobility, most of whom obtained their rank not by right of inheritance but by the favor of the Czar or as a reward for their military services. Some of these service nobility were rich in vast possessions, others did not differ much from common peasants in the amount of land they possessed, in standard of living, and in formal education.

Internal squabbles among the landed magnates and the service nobility were weakening the strength of the Czardom in relation to its adversaries. This situation offered a strong argument in favor of the Czar's despotism and at the same time eased the crushing of the opposition in the interest of unlimited power. "If subjects submit not themselves unto their ruler, never shall strife cease in the land," said Ivan the Terrible.[9]

The best way to break the power of the landed aristocracy was by making them economically dependent upon the Czar. This objective was achieved in two ways. One was forceful expropriation, resettlement, imprisonment and assassination of recalcitrant boyars. The other consisted of the increased emphasis on *pomestie* system of conditional land tenure as against *votchina*, or hereditary land property.

According to the pomestie system, which followed Mongol traditions, the crown lands, together with the peasants settled on them, were donated to the holder of an office or of a military rank under the condition of obligatory and loyal service to the Czar, and only as long as the loyal service on the part of the land recipient lasted. The *pomeshchik* was obliged to provide a contingent of soldiers according to the size of his donation. This obligation devolved from father to son. The older sons would obtain from the Czar new pomesties and the youngest son would, as a rule, inherit the pomestie of his father.[10] In the Byzantine Empire, too, the land was given in reward for service, but there the land became hereditary property that could be disposed of at will by the holder. In Russia the system of conditional land ownership meant, like in the Mongol political system, complete

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565 The speeches of the peasants' deputies
423 in the second Duma unmistakably show that the peasants con-
[446] sidered that the land belonged to them and to nobody else and that the times of degrading oppression were over. They declared themselves in favor of the free distribution of all the land that was in the possession of the nobility, the Church, and the state:

> We are talking of land these days as of nothing else. We are told it is a sacred, inviolate possession. I think if the people want it, there can be no inviolateness about it. Gentlemen of the nobility! You think we have forgotten the time when you used us as stakes in playing at cards and exchanged us for dogs! We know we were your sacred inviolate property. But the land has been stolen from us. The peasants who have sent me here have said that the land is ours! We have come here not to buy but to take it.[14]

169 Because of such beliefs and ideas which were intensified by
565 systematic revolutionary propaganda of professional conspirators
● 425 and agitators, any rumors concerning the land always found a
627 ready response among the peasantry. It is for the same reason that often only a vague rumor about a government land decree was sufficient to convince the peasants that the land was given back to them by the Czar, but that it was the lesser government officials, bribed by the landlords, who kept the land out of their hands. Such land-hungry peasants, already inclined to rebel against age-long and humiliating dependency, were ready to take the law into their own hands, to seize the manorial lands, to loot the estates and to kill the landlords whenever they felt that the power of the existing authorities was crumbling.

178 The professional conspirators among the Russian revolution-
565 ary intelligentsia took full advantage of such inclinations. Their revolutionary plans were especially favored by the growing differentiation in the Russian villages. In the first decade of the twentieth century economic and social differentiation in the Great-Russian village was already well advanced. It was favored by a series of government measures (Stolypin reforms)[15] which were aimed at developing a stratum of independent and prosperous peasantry and destroying the system of communal landholding. As a result of such measures the Great-Russian village became by the first decade of this century composed of a number

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565 517 icism of its rank and file, that gave this Party an advantage over its main rival for power, the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, in the chaotic days of 1917.

727 669 565 Just as it had happened in the past, a weakening of the prestige of the ruling classes as a result of defeats on the battlefield led to peasant uprisings. Almost immediately after the Czar's abdication, that is, in March, 1917, peasant rebellions arose in 34 districts and by June spread to 325 districts. The distrubances were again especially intensive in the upper Don and in the middle Volga, the regions where the tradition of revolt was strong and the situation for revolt matured owing to unsatisfactory conditions within the land communes.

665 669 The chaos that ensued in the village was emphasized by factional strife and indecision in the center. As a result of the fall of the old Czarist regime, the two most extreme revolutionary parties, the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks, entered into a contest for power. While the Socialist Revolutionaries controlled the Provisional Government (since May, 1917), the Bolsheviks did everything to undermine their regime and to seize the power for themselves. In the question of rural policies, the government of Socialist Revolutionaries attempted to stop the outbreaks of lawlessness and disorder in the villages by promising an equitable solution of all rural problems on the basis of laws that were to be passed by a Constitutional Assembly.

[925] [565] But the Bolsheviks counteracted such policies by inciting the peasants to seize the lands at once. The Bolsheviks also deliberately sharpened the existing social cleavages in the villages by inciting the lower peasant strata against the upper. The Bolshevised soldiers, on leave or deserting the front, pushed more moderate elements into the background and led the peasant mobs not only against the landlords, but also against the more prosperous peasant classes. Hence, attacks on *Khutoryane* (hereditary peasant homestead owners) and *otrubniki* (peasant individual property owners) were as frequent as those against the manorial estates.

Many soldiers deserted the front because the Bolshevik agitators told them that the land was being distributed back home and that those who were present would get the choice grounds. The government, controlled by the Socialist Revolutionaries,